

**San Diego** — On Tuesday, Representative Duncan Hunter, a Marine Corps veteran and member of the House Armed Services Committee, toured the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) 2, USS Independence, in San Diego.

“After touring the Independence and learning more about the vessel and its mission, it’s clear that there is a definitive need for the LCS—and the Independence, in particular. The Independence is a great looking ship, and it provides enhanced capability—including counter mine warfare—that will enable the Navy to project power and move quickly and efficiently in the world’s coastal waters or littorals.

“In fact, one of the great advantages of the Independence is its speed. It’s a vessel that can move quickly in any situation, even when fully loaded. And when moving at speed, it’s still maneuverable. The Independence also carries the most fuel efficient engines in the Navy today.

“While LCS and the Independence in particular provide a tremendous benefit to the U.S. Navy and its global mission, the LCS is still not a replacement vessel for other ships in the fleet. It’s more important that the Navy is adequately sized with the right number of ships to meet existing and emerging threats instead of a fleet built on trade-offs and overemphasis on certain vessels to the detriment of others. I am convinced that there is a great need for both LCS variants, but the focus of the Navy on building its fleet around this ship class is worrisome and wrong.

America’s Navy must be well rounded and capable of performing every mission in the combat spectrum. The LCS is invaluable for filling an existing capability gap. However, we are creating operational gaps in other areas by asserting that the LCS can do all things for all people.

“In one such example, the Marine Corps, at a minimum, is still short two amphibious vessels. Now that the Marine Corps mission is expanding under the new Asia-Pacific strategy and with the presence of Marines in Australia, having the right number of amphibious vessels is absolutely necessary for the fulfillment and execution of the Marine Corps’ basic mission. And with the shift toward the Pacific and amphibious operations, this is one way that we can honor our commitment to the mission assigned to the Marine Corps by the Commander-in-Chief.

“The Independence is a large, fast and versatile vessel that supports the Navy’s conventional mission. And the LCS Freedom looks well suited to perform mine clearance and small boat,

special operations missions. But as we look to the future, and we evaluate the size and capability of America's Navy, building ships like the Independence and Freedom must not come at the cost of a smaller naval fleet that is incapable of sufficiently projecting power across the world and defending American security interests on multiple fronts against multiple threats, from Iranian small boats to a traditional Chinese Navy."